

Approved

The Director of Central Intelligence
Release 2004/05/05 : CIA-RDP80M

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Washington, D. C. 20505

Copy 2 of 3

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1977

General Robert J. Dixon, USAF
Commander, Headquarters Tactical
Air Command
Department of the Air Force
Langley Air Force Base, Virginia 23665

Dear Bob:

I appreciate your frank appraisal of the informal briefing on the "Military Balance in Europe" that CIA members gave you and your staff on 21 March. Such feedback obviously helps us to do a better job.

A review of the briefing reveals that there are certain areas that deserve criticism. Among these are:

- A lack of balance in presenting the historic trends to the present day in ground and tactical air forces;
- A failure to address the implications of logistics on effectiveness and sustainability of forces;
- The exclusion of any assessment of air defense and air superiority in evaluating the TACAIR balance with almost exclusive focus on a variety of range-payload comparison.

I understand that you expressed concern about the rather positive position the briefing took on the superiority of NATO pilots and on the level of Soviet and Pact air force manning. With respect to the quality of pilots, our assessment is based on the monitoring of the quality and quantity of training within the best Soviet operational units and has been corroborated by defector comments. We have high confidence that Soviet pilots in these units get about half the flying hours that US pilots in deployed units get, and the US pilots participate in nearly four times as many combat-related training events as their Soviet counterparts. We also know that Soviet units have about the same number of pilots per aircraft as do we but that about 20 percent

(EXECUTIVE REGISTRY FILE *Air Force*)

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of their pilots are not combat qualified. Additionally, if the Soviets withheld assets for QRA, the pilots withheld would be their most fully qualified leaving fewer fully qualified pilots for the conventional mission. Though we have not attempted to assign a numerical factor to describe the difference, it is the intelligence judgment that Soviet pilots in a combat role are inferior to US pilots. The other Pact pilots follow very similar training syllabi to the Soviets and can be considered near equal to them in quality. The final piece of this non-quantified assessment is the relative quality of non-US NATO pilots. The Intelligence Community has not concentrated on this aspect to sufficient degree to render a useful judgment. Since they constitute a majority of the NATO pilots, I think we need to do more here and I solicit your views and any useful data you might have that bears on that problem.

In the case of peacetime manning levels there is clear evidence that Soviet air armies augment manpower in mobilization. It is also known that mobilization of air force units in the satellites calls for significant increases in manpower, though we do not know what specific function these additions perform. It is also known that Soviet and satellite manning per aircraft is about half to two-thirds that of the US. It is our assessment that both Soviet and satellite air armies are manned in peacetime to levels which would not allow their employment at their full combat potential.

I agree that the treatment of TACAIR in the briefing was shallow and not as balanced as it should be. A more comprehensive treatment was done by MITRE in their study "On the Net Assessment of Opposing Tactical Air Forces in Europe" (MTR 3159, December 1975) which your staff holds. The study is much outdated since the order of battle provided MITRE was that of about 1970. Obviously much has happened in the ensuing seven years. For example, the range payload advantages depicted by MITRE are no longer valid. Using the MITRE-developed measure of deliverable tons (for the ground attack mission only and excluding losses and munition effectiveness), we believe the trend is as indicated on the attached rough figures. I would appreciate your comment on that study and whether you think it worth updating.

Many thanks for the tip off. Best to you and Kelly.

Sincerely,

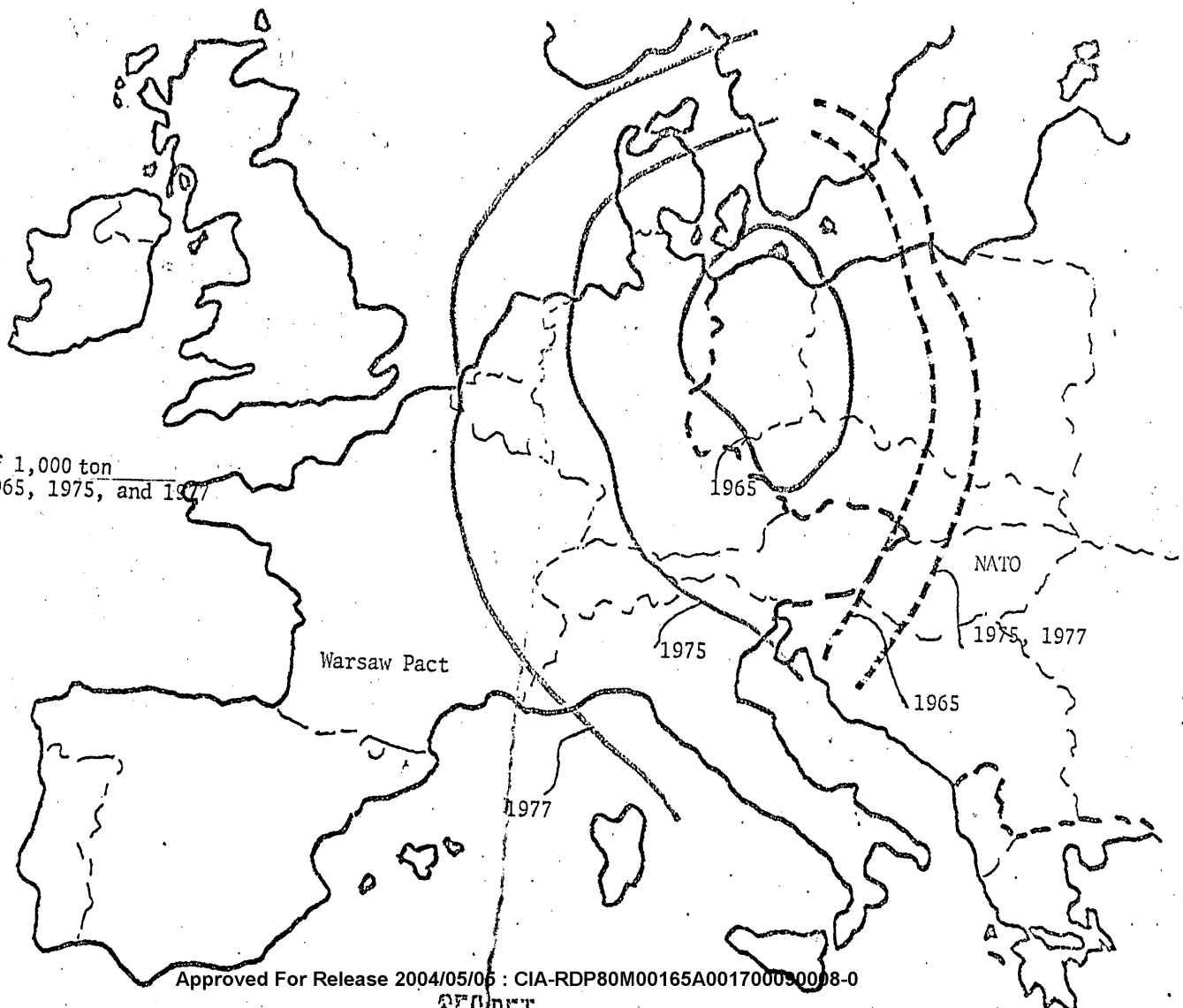
/s/

STANSFIELD TURNER

Attachment

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Progression of 1,000 ton
isoton Line for 1965, 1975, and 1977



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<p>F. X. I. The attached picked up in O/D CI. Looks like they have already passed a copy to NIO/Skelund.</p> <p>B. J. J.</p>		
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FORM NO. 241
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REPLACES FORM 36-8
WHICH MAY BE USED.

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25 JUN 1977

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results
study (which was
triggered by a
Dixon letter)
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(EXCLUDED FROM FILE) *Am. Foreign*